



CHICKEN PICKIN' 101



BY SAM SMILEY

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Chicken Pickin' 101 – 10 Licks

Thanks for downloading this free eBook, I hope you can get a lot out of the licks here. Make sure to stay tuned to Sam Smiley Music for more country and chicken pickin' resources. If you have any questions just head there and fill out the contact form OR get in touch on Facebook or Twitter.

Let's crank up the twang and get into the licks.

James Burton – All of Me Belongs to All of You

The image displays a musical score for a guitar lick. The top staff is in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a quarter note F#4, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G#4, A4), a quarter note F#4, another triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G#4, A4), a quarter note F#4, and a final triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G#4, A4). The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the first triplet. A 1/2 note pickup is indicated above the first triplet. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature (TAB) showing the fretting hand positions. It features a triplet of eighth notes on the 3rd fret, followed by a 1/2 note pickup, and then another triplet of eighth notes on the 3rd fret. The tablature is labeled 'T' for Treble and 'B' for Bass.

Many will say that James Burton is actually THE father of chicken pickin' and his playing with Merle Haggard, Elvis Presley, and the Everly Brothers certainly helps back that up. This lick is from the Merle Haggard classic "All of Me Belongs to All of You." This lick has the muted notes that are an essential sound to chicken pickin. Mute the notes with your fretting hand instead of the picking hand. In order to do this, just lift up slightly on the note.

Albert Lee – Luxury Liner

The image shows a musical score for a guitar lick in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked 'mf'. The lick consists of two measures. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes: F#4, G#4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G#4, F#4. The second measure contains: F#4, G#4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G#4, F#4. Below the staff is a guitar tablature (TAB) with fret numbers: 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 9, 7, 7, 6, 5, 6, 4, 3, 2, 0, 2, 1, 0. The TAB is divided into two measures corresponding to the musical staff. Below the TAB are eight rectangular boxes representing the guitar strings, with some boxes containing horizontal lines to indicate fretting.

Albert Lee was a key member of Emmylou Harris' band for the album *Luxury Liner* and plays some absolute smoking licks throughout the album. This lick is over an E7 chord. He starts with thirds, and really plays a pretty typical line here. The thing that makes this really cool is the rhythmic variation he puts in with the 16th notes on beats 3 of bar 1, and 1 and 3 on bar 2. It's a subtle difference but gives it the chicken pickin' sound. The descending figure down the neck is also very cool.

Brent Mason – Back When

The image shows a musical score for a guitar lick in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked 'mf'. The lick consists of two measures. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes: F#4, G#4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G#4, F#4. The second measure contains: F#4, G#4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G#4, F#4. Below the staff is a guitar tablature (TAB) with fret numbers: 9, X, 7, X, 5, X, 2, 0. The TAB is divided into two measures corresponding to the musical staff. Below the TAB are eight rectangular boxes representing the guitar strings, with some boxes containing horizontal lines to indicate fretting. An arrow labeled 'full' points to the 2nd fret on the 2nd string in the second measure.

Brent Mason was the guitarist on some of Tim McGraw's biggest hits, including "Back When." This lick uses the 'clucks' of muted strings. Make sure to mute using your fretting hand – not your picking hand. The bend at the end brings the 2nd of the scale up to the flatted 3rd which gives it a nice bluesy sound.

Brent Mason – Mercury Blues



Our first lick is from the end of Alan Jackson's "Mercury Blues." This lick is in the key of G and uses a few open strings. One of the hallmarks of Chicken Pickin' guitar is the use of triplets and pull offs in the lines. This one has both.

Brent Mason – She's Got the Rhythm

This lick is from another Alan Jackson song, "She's Got the Rhythm." Again Brent Mason relies on the triplet. This lick features double stops all the way through. The lick is based on sort of a blues scale/mixolydian (major with flatted 7th) hybrid scale. The lick is in the key of A.

Roy Nichols – Workin’ Man Blues

The image shows a musical score for the song "Workin' Man Blues" by Roy Nichols. The top staff is a melody in 4/4 time, marked *mf*. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some notes marked with an 'x' indicating a specific picking pattern. The tablature shows fret numbers (0, 3, 0, x, x, 0, 3, x, 0, x, 3, 1, 3) and a final half-note pickup (1/2) indicated by an arrow. The picking pattern is represented by vertical lines below the fret numbers, showing a sequence of down and up strokes.

Roy Nichols was the guitarist for Merle Haggard and another one of the fathers of the Chicken Pickin’ style. “Workin’ Man Blues” is easily one of his most famous performance. Make sure to check out the recording of this one to get the vibe. This is a great example of the “cluck-a” low picking in Chicken Pickin’.

Roy Nichols – Workin’ Man Blues

The image shows a musical score for the song "Workin' Man Blues" by Roy Nichols. The top staff is a melody in 4/4 time, marked *mf*. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some notes marked with a sharp sign (#). The tablature shows fret numbers (4, 6, 4, 4, 6, 4, 4, 6, 4, 4, 6, 5, 6, 4) and a final half-note pickup (1/2) indicated by an arrow. The picking pattern is represented by vertical lines below the fret numbers, showing a sequence of down and up strokes.

Here is Nichols’ ending to the solo on “Workin’ Man Blues.” This one sounds much more difficult than it really is- he’s basically playing a hammer on lick on each set of 2 strings. Very basic, but very cool. Since it’s a three note lick you get an interesting dotted-quarter vibe.

Brad Paisley – The Best Thing I Had Goin’



Brad Paisley is a master of the pull off and triplet feel. This lick is in the key of A. He is just following the A mixolydian scale (with a natural 7th thrown in at the end). The use of the ringing open strings makes this one very unique.

Brad Paisley – Little Moments

The image shows a musical score for a guitar lick in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef, labeled with 'T', 'A', and 'B' for the strings. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody starts with a half rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes G#4, A4, and B4, then another triplet of eighth notes C#5, D5, and E5, and finally a half note F#5. The bass line features a sequence of notes: 0 (open string), 2 (finger 2 on D4), 0 (open string), 2 (finger 2 on D4), 4 (finger 4 on F#4), 2 (finger 2 on D4), 4 (finger 4 on F#4), 2 (finger 2 on D4), 4 (finger 4 on F#4), and 4 (finger 4 on F#4). The lick ends with a half note F#5. The dynamic marking *mf* is present, and an arrow labeled 'full' points to the final note.

Here is another Brad Paisley lick featuring hammer ons and triplets. This one is clearly in the key of A, moving up the A major pentatonic scale.

Don Rich – Open Up Your Heart



Don Rich was one of the fathers of Chicken Pickin' guitar as the guitarist with Buck Owens. The second lick from "Open Up Your Heart" is a quintessential chicken pickin' lick. This one can be transferred to many different situations. Make sure that the triplets on the G string are muffled or deadened, that's where the sound comes from.

Classic Stock Lick



This lick is a stock lick that you would find in just about any country guitarist's vocabulary. This one is in the key of A using mostly the mixolydian scale.

Free Download

First of all I want to thank you for signing up for my email list. Audio files for the licks presented here have been uploaded to my Facebook page. All you need to do is go to [Facebook.com/samsmileymusic](https://www.facebook.com/samsmileymusic) and hit "Like". You will then be able to download a free zip file containing MP3s of all the licks.